

## NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

### OCTOBER 17, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: NH Fish & Game Department, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301.

Commissioners Present: M. Hodgson, J. Caveney, R. Green, B. Temple, E. Stohl, S. Price, J. Titone, M. Lachance, & P. DeBow.

Commissioners absent/excused: C. Hodgdon & A.J. DeRosa

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman E. Stohl called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m., and asked the audience to join in the pledge of allegiance. He informed the audience that the public is entitled to attend all Commission meetings and when recognized by the Chairman, the public may speak on any item on the agenda. The Chairman reserves the right to limit comment to the extent necessary for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1.) Commissioner R. Green moved to approve the September 19, 2023 Commission Minutes and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner B. Temple moved to accept consent agenda items 2a. – 2d., as presented below and Commissioner R. Green seconded.

2a.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$650.00 from the Nash Stream Camp Owners Association, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account. There was a note attached thanking the department for keeping the roads & trails clear and safe.

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$25.00 in memory of Peter Abair, avid sportsmen, of Springfield, NH, from Howard & Cynthia Anderson, Springfield, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2c.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$500.00 in memory of Scott LaCrosse, retired District Five Lieutenant, who passed away on April 2, 2019, from his wife, Kim LaCrosse. This donation will be used to purchase security cameras at the Sewall's Falls storage facility.

2d.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$5,725.00 from Granite State Whitetails, to be utilized to purchase a Van Gaalen Fish Egg Sorter equipped with a landlocked salmon egg wheel for use at the New Hampton Hatchery.

The vote to accept the above donations was unanimous in the affirmative.

#### **INFORMATION ITEMS:**

1.) There were no questions for Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, regarding the financial statements.

2.) The Wildlife Division's Game Program came before the Commission and presented background information regarding a cooperative research project with the University of New Hampshire, which will aim to quantify fisher survival rates, space use, and cause-specific mortality.

Andy Timmins, Game Programs Supervisor, reported that the Wildlife Division plans to enter into a four year Cooperative Project Agreement with the University of New Hampshire on research to quantify fisher survival rates, space use, and cause-specific mortality. He reported that the research would be funded through Federal PR (Pittman Robertson dollars (75%) and the University of New Hampshire (25%) via cost share. The Wildlife Division has received an approved grant application for expenditure of federal monies from the USFWS (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service); therefore, there will be no cost to the department.

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated, "I am very excited about this! Congratulations for securing that grant. I look forward to seeing the results of the study."

3.) The Wildlife Division came before the Commission and provided a presentation on coyotes.

Dan Bergeron, Chief, Wildlife Division, introduced Patrick Tate, Furbearer Biologist, who provided the below presentation. (See attached for full presentation).

Pat reported that New Hampshire lies in a unique place in terms of white-tailed deer range and genetic makeup of eastern coyote. The White Mountains and areas north have higher elevation and experience greater winter severity compared to areas south. The NH Fish and Game Department lacks data to measure predation rates of deer by coyotes, therefore, managers are required to utilize literature involving white-tailed deer, eastern coyotes, and knowledge of habitat to predict impacts. Due to coyote predation on adult female deer in New Brunswick, wildlife managers determined that both management of winter habitat and predator management was necessary to sustain deer populations at desired levels. Deer mortality from coyote predation was reported highest during April-May (Whitlaw et al. 1998). Interestingly, Whitlaw et al. (1998) reported that deer exhibited typical yarding behavior in northern New Brunswick whereas deer from a southern study area did not. Whitlaw et al. (1998) concluded that predator-caused mortality rates did not differ between the two study areas.

In Nova Scotia, Patterson et al. (1998) investigated the influence of white-tailed deer and snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*) availability on the feeding habits of coyotes from 1992 to 1997. Based on analyzing 2,443 scats, deer and hare were dominant food items during times of the year when other food sources were limited. Summer food items included small mammals and fruits. Consumption of deer was reported to decline, as hare density increased. However, response was not proportional to change in the relative densities of deer or hare. In areas of low deer densities, coyotes were reported to have continued to feed largely on deer, even as hare abundance increased. During June and July, consumption of deer fawns exceeded that of hare in all areas, regardless of some locations having high hare densities. High use of deer appeared to be associated with winter vulnerability/severity or, in the case of young fawns, inability to escape. During mild winters, Patterson et al. (1998), suspected coyotes were forced to focus hunting efforts on prey other than deer, regardless of density, as deer had low vulnerability. When severe winter conditions occur, coyotes switched to feeding mainly on deer. Prey switching by eastern coyotes may be influenced by changes in prey abundance, vulnerability, and diversity.

Messier et al. (1986) studied white tailed deer predation by eastern coyote in Quebec, an area considered to be at the northern range limit of white-tailed deer, using scat analysis and observations of predated deer in 155-km<sup>2</sup> forested area, which included a 36-km<sup>2</sup> deer wintering area. Coyote scat constituted about 80% deer hair by volume from January-April, 50% from May-July, and 20% from August-December. Consumption of deer during summer consisted primarily of fawns. Snowshoe hare consumption was reported to occur from May-December. During winter, coyotes preyed primarily on fawns and older deer, though not necessarily individuals of poorer physiological condition. Messier et al. (1986) concluded that coyotes may impact deer numbers in southern Quebec.

Eastern coyotes have been reported as a major contributor factor to widespread deer declines throughout eastern Canada and Maine (Lavigne 1992, Patterson 1994, Parker 1995). Over a broad range of deer densities, predation rates of deer by coyotes were influenced primarily by deer density, the availability of alternate prey, and coyote social behavior. Snow depth does influence deer predation vulnerability during winter, particularly when deer are at lower range of deer densities (0-2 deer/km<sup>2</sup>). In areas where deer and hare are principal prey, predation on deer may increase sharply with increased snow depths or when hare populations decline (Patterson and Messier 2000).

In New Hampshire, winter severity decreases significantly as you move from north to south within the state. For that reason, it should not be assumed that the dynamics between coyotes and deer are the same in New Hampshire as they are in states and provinces to the north.

Pat shared the below list of recommended changes identified by GMT (Game Management Team).



He also shared the below graphs of Coyote Hunting Seasons & Reporting Requirements in the Northeast and a Deer Vulnerability to Predation list:

## Coyote Hunting Seasons and Reporting Requirements in the NE

State/Province	Season Dates	Mandatory Reporting
New Hampshire	NCS	No
Maine	NCS	No
Vermont	NCS	No
Massachusetts	Oct 14-Mar 8	Yes
New York	Oct 1-Mar 31	No
Connecticut	NCS	No
Nova Scotia	NCS	No
New Brunswick	Oct 2-Feb 29	No
Quebec	Oct 18-Mar 31	No

## Deer Vulnerability to Predation

- ◆ Region
- ◆ Snow depth and condition
- ◆ Duration of winter
- ◆ Food availability
  - Browse
  - Alternative prey abundance
- ◆ Habitat quality (stand dynamics, DWA)
- ◆ Deer density
- ◆ Predator density



Lavigne 1992; Patterson 1994; Parker 1995; Patterson et al. (1998); Whitlaw et al. (1998); Patterson and Messier (2000)

### Coyote Population Monitoring in New Hampshire

Pat reported that the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department monitors eastern coyote populations using an index of capture per unit effort (CPUE) provided by licensed trappers (see Figure 2 in attached presentation). He stated that additionally, other sources of information serve as ancillary data used to monitor trends in coyote abundance, including coyote take by Wildlife Control Operators (WCO; Figure 3) and annual human-coyote conflict levels (Figure 4). Over the past four years, the Department has collected observation rates of several furbearers, including coyotes, on multiple

surveys sent to both deer and turkey hunters. Once several years of data have been collected via these surveys, it will provide valuable data that serve as an index to furbearer population trends over time.

In closing, he reported that in 2021, the Department contracted with the University of New Hampshire on research to estimate furbearer density at the statewide level, quantify furbearer-habitat relationships, and evaluate current population monitoring methods for furbearers. This research effort will conclude in 2026.

Commissioner M. Hodgson thanked Pat for the informative presentation and stated, “You touched on a lot of my concerns.” She further stated that she was happy to see the list of recommended additions to the furbearer reporting requirements.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that what he took away from the presentation is that it does not appear at this time that coyotes are affecting the deer population.

Pat responded that coyote are not threatening the deer population at this point, and can adapt to all habitat types and threats on their landscape.

See attached for the full presentation.

#### **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:**

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE:** Public policy development & recommendations, as well as Commission advocacy before legislature.

**Commissioner Price, Chair;** Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & Green.

**Staff members:** Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting and approved the minutes of the September 29, 2023 meeting.

She reported that the committee reviewed the recreational tuna tournament license for nonresidents and voted that it was not necessary to take a position on it at this time.

Commissioner S. Price moved to approve Fis.1101-(parts & sections) relative to Licenses & Permits, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to accept Fis. 1201- Hunter Education Program; pertaining to student qualifications, as modified by the committee and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to accept Fis. 1202 – Hunter & Bow Hunter Ed Instructors; removing the requirement for a hearing when an instructor is terminated and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote carried with 8 in favor, 1 opposed (R. Green).

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:** Commission professional development, education & policy recommendations related to Commission conduct & activities.

**Commissioner Caveney, Chair;** Commissioners: Lachance, Temple, Hodgson & Titone.

**Staff member:** Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that he had a work session with the Cheri Patterson, Department's Representative on the committee, and they collected a bunch of notes from prior committee meetings. He reported that the committee would be meeting in the near future.

**SUSTAINABILITY & STRATEGIC PLANNING:** Agency funding, development & oversight of strategic plan.

**Commissioner Hodgdon, Chair;** Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, Hodgson & Titone.  
**Staff member:** Scott Mason.

No report, Commissioner C. Hodgdon was absent from the meeting.

**RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE:** Policy recommendations related to agency infrastructure; including facilities, public access, habitat & wildlife.

**Commissioner Green, Chair;** Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, Temple & Lachance.  
**Staff member:** Dianne Timmins.

Commissioner R. Green reported that the committee would be meeting in November to discuss the Hatchery Reports that the Commission received today. He asked Commissioners to send him an email with any specific information requests/questions they may have for the committee to discuss.

He further asked that Director Mason name a staff member who will be updating the committee on upcoming land projects/requests.

Director Mason agreed to do so.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION:** Engagement, partnership, awards, public recognition & education strategies for the public & interest groups.

**Commissioner DeRosa, Chair;** Commissioners: DeBow, Hodgdon & Price.  
**Staff members:** Dan Bergeron, Kevin Jordan & Cheri Patterson.

Interim Chair S. Price reported that she followed up with Ms. Beck of the Wilton Conservation Commission regarding her request/offer to assist the Commission in clarifying their duties and responsibilities for the public. She reported that Ms. Beck is willing to distribute an outline, to include the duties and responsibilities of the Commission and a bio of each Commissioner, via the Conservation Commission Newsletter, which every local Conservation Commission receives. Commissioner S. Price state, "I think it's worthwhile to do."

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated that she thought it was a good request, although thought it may be better if the Commission were to put something together and post it on Commission page, on the Department website.

Commissioner R. Green stated, "The intent of this is to clear up any confusion as to what the Commission's role & responsibilities are."

Commissioner M. Hodgson moved that the Public Engagement & Education Committee create a one page summary of the roles & responsibilities of the Commission and bring it back to the full Commission for a final vote at the November Commission Meeting and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**SEACOAST REPORT:** Commissioner J. Titone reported that he attended a meeting on September 29, 2023, at the Region 3 Office in Durham, NH, held by the National Marine Fisheries Service. He reported that the meeting was with representatives and the commercial fishing industry to listen to concerns with NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), and the lack of credible data for stock assessments. He reported that NOAA has not performed any trawl surveys in over four years. He further reported that the commercial fishermen feel that since they are the ones out fishing every day, their data should be considered and used in the stock assessments.

In addition, he reported that discussion took place relative to Offshore Wind and the potential conflicts over the lack of fishing grounds, habitat destruction, and lack of data on magnetic field affects.

**LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Price.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee has not met.

**NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Hodgdon.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon was absent from the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Commissioner J. Caveney revisited his concerns over the conflict of use on Swanzey Lake, a prominent trout fishery, and the permitting of a Slalom Water Ski Course by NH Marine Patrol. He reported that he has been to the lake to observe this and it is a tremendous activity. He further reported that this activity would be going through the rulemaking process and inquired how to go about starting a conversation regarding this.

Commissioner R. Green moved that Commissioner J. Caveney work with the Chair and Vice Chair to compile a letter, signed by Chairman Stohl, to the PWAAB (Public Water Access Advisory Board), inquiring if they would be willing to have a joint discussion on permitting this activity and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Stohl reported that Commissioner Mark Lachance has submitted his resignation from the Commission, as his current job does not allow him the proper time to commit to being Belknap County Commissioner. He stated, "Commissioner Lachance was an asset to the Commission, he was an active member and represented his county very well." He personally thanked Mark for his service on the Commission.

At this time, Commissioner P. DeBow moved to skip the November Commission Meeting and Commissioner S. Price seconded.

Commissioner P. DeBow further elaborated that there was nothing pressing that the Commission had to address until December & January.

Commissioner R. Green stated that he would be voting against that, as the Commission has donations to accept every month.

Chairman E. Stohl stated, “I am opposed to not meeting in November, as well. The public has the right to speak before the Commission every month.”

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated, “I would not vote in favor of cancelling the November Commission meeting, as we have a presentation schedule to follow and staff have planned accordingly.” She further stated that the Public Engagement & Education Committee has an assignment, which would be delayed if the November meeting were cancelled.

The vote to cancel the November Commission Meeting failed with 4 in favor (S. Price, J. Titone, B. Temple & P. DeBow), 5 opposed (M. Lachance, E. Stohl, M. Hodgson, J. Caveney & R. Green).

At this time, Commissioner B. Temple moved to change the November 21, 2023 Commission Meeting to November 14, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., Commissioner S. Price seconded.

The vote to change the November 21, 2023 Commission Meeting to November 14, 2023 carried with 6 in favor (B. Temple, J. Caveney, E. Stohl, J. Titone, M. Lachance & S. Price), 3 opposed (R. Green, P. DeBow & M. Hodgson).

**COMMISSIONERS REPORTS:** Commissioners will report on their recent activities as it relates to Fish & Game Commission duties and responsibilities. This is an informational item only.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that he attended the NHIAA State Bass Fishing Tournament and found it to be quite interesting. He inquired as to whether the students could get first refusal for a date to host the tournament.

Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries Division, responded that she could not accommodate that, as the tournament permit process and guidelines are by rule and are not negotiable.

Commissioner S. Price reported that she would be attending a charity trap-shoot fundraiser for breast cancer awareness on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at the Winnipisaukee Sportsmen’s Club, to support the Club’s Vice President, who is currently battling the disease.

Commissioner B. Temple reported that he visited the Aaron Ledge property and thought it was a nice area.

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT:**

Director Mason reported that the Biennial Hearings would need to be scheduled and posted shortly, taking place early December, consisting of two meetings, one in Concord, and one in Lancaster.

He reported that there was once again an employee pig roast this year, which had a very good turnout. He reported that staff had a good time and had a corn-hole tournament, as well.

He reported that he and Dianne Timmins had an introductory meeting with the Forest Service at the Berlin Fish Hatchery. He reported that the hatchery is on U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service land, and that the department would be working with them when considering any construction projects at that location.

He further reported that he attended two meetings in Pittsburg, NH, this month; one was the CT Lakes Headwaters Citizen's Advisory Meeting, the other was an input meeting for the Forest/tract plan.

In addition, he reported that he attended and spoke at the State Line Field & Stream Club Meeting. He announced that any group/club wanting him to speak or attend their meetings to contact him and he would try to accommodate those events.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

- Weldon Bosworth, Gilford, NH – congratulated the department on getting the fisher study, as he believes the fisher population is in real trouble. He recommended keeping a tally of the hours spent collecting the fisher data.

He spoke in regards to coyote, and stated, “We know they are predators and kill, that is the bottom line. Today’s presentation tells us not to be concerned.”

He reported that the Commission would see a bill this year, similar to the petition recently submitted, proposing to close the coyote season for 5 months.

In closing, Weldon stated, “Great step in the additional mandatory reporting requirements.”

- Anton Kaska, Manchester, NH – recommended that the Wildlife Division look further into non-reported coyote kills, as he was unaware of the requirement to report such activity. He reported that he has lost \$1,000 worth of sheep in the last 30 days and has shot five coyotes, his neighboring farm shot four, and they know of an additional seven in the area. He reported that he would make other farmers in the area aware to report those kills from this point forward.
- Chris Schadler, Webster, NH – thanked Pat Tate for the presentation and stated that she was sorry she did not hear more about the ecology of the coyote. She stated, “We know they are a predator and taking deer is not new news. The more you kill coyotes, the faster they reproduce; therefore, killing them is not the best management practice and should be done by science.”

She stated, “I want you to be the Commission that takes the fear out of the public with this animal. You are moving in the right direction.”

- Julia Snyder, Newmarket, NH – questioned the mindset of the Commission, as it relates to the discussion/concern over the Swanzey Lake Slalom Water Ski Course disrupting anglers and it being a conflict of use on the waterbody. She stated that the waterbody should be for all to recreate and should satisfy everyone.

At this time, 3:31 p.m., Commissioner R. Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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Eric Stohl, Chairman  
NH Fish & Game Commission